



## Update from U.S. Sen. John Cornyn January 2006

In the coming year, the second session of the 109th Congress, the Senate will address many issues of profound importance to the American people, among them bolstering border security and reforming our broken immigration system, reauthorizing the Patriot Act, a key tool in fighting terrorists, following the recent temporary extension, and continuing to see that our country has the resources it needs to continue to fight and win the war on terror. In all of these issues, you have my assurance that I will continue working hard for my fellow Texans.

### **Texas Wildfire Relief Efforts**

In response to the recent wildfires that have burned hundreds of thousands of acres across Texas, the President earlier this month granted Texas a **disaster declaration** that will bring much-needed relief to the most affected counties in our state. Our work with FEMA and other federal officials is ongoing; we will do all we can to ensure we continue to overcome bureaucratic roadblocks in order to provide much-needed assistance in a timely manner. The President also appointed a Federal Coordinating Officer to help prevent unnecessary delay in the relief efforts, which should further streamline the process.

The Major Disaster Declaration will allow FEMA to provide two kinds of assistance to Texas. All 254 counties will be eligible to receive Public Assistance for emergency protective measures taken by local governments in response to wildfires that pose a significant threat to life and property. Additionally, select counties are eligible for Individual Assistance, which will help compensate home owners and business owners in those counties who suffered losses from these fires. Additional assistance may be approved as events warrant, and we will continue to inform Texans of any relevant developments. More information may be accessed online [here](#).

For More Information:

<http://cornyn.senate.gov/record.cfm?id=250686>

<http://www.fema.gov/news/event.fema?id=5765>

### **The Supreme Court and Judge Samuel Alito, Jr.**

This month the Senate Judiciary Committee considered the **nomination of Judge Samuel Alito, Jr.**, to the Supreme Court of the United States. Judge Alito is highly qualified, extremely fair, and a man of unquestioned integrity. It will be very difficult for the President's opponents to filibuster Judge Alito. Despite that, some have attacked this man and attempted to distort his impeccable qualifications, even while his nomination continues to receive praise from people across the political spectrum. I will continue to do my part to set the record straight, defend this fine nominee, until the work is finished and he receives a fair up-or-down vote in the Senate.

For More Information:

<http://cornyn.senate.gov/record.cfm?id=250701>

<http://www.cornyn.senate.gov/SCOTUS>

### **Texas/U.S. Jobs and the Economy**

Texas and the nation continue to see strong economic growth as the good news about the economy keeps coming, with the national unemployment rate slipping to 4.9 percent and unemployment claims at the lowest level in the last five years. According to **recent figures** from the U.S. Treasury Department, since the President signed the *Jobs and Growth Act* in May of 2003, Texas has added 317,000 jobs; 17,300 jobs were created in November of 2005 in our state and, at 5.2 percent, the unemployment rate for Texas is one of the lowest in modern history; and from the second to third quarters of 2005, personal income in Texas

rose 1.2 percent. In early January, I discussed this strong economic growth at the UPS facility in Austin, as well as during a visit with the Greater Dallas Chamber of Commerce.

According to labor statistics, two million new jobs were created in the United States in 2005. As long as we continue to keep taxes low and limit the regulatory burden on entrepreneurs and small businesses, they'll continue to create jobs and opportunities and ultimately prosperity for the people of Texas and across America.

For More Information:

<http://cornyn.senate.gov/record.cfm?id=250699>

### **Texas Travel**

During the past month I had the opportunity to **travel throughout Texas**, and I look forward to several trips home in the coming weeks.

In Mission I met with elected officials and community leaders to discuss the issues necessary to ensure the success of the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project Levee Rehabilitation, and I will continue to work with South Texas leaders, the International Boundary and Water Commission, and my colleagues in the Senate to adequately address the needs of this levee project.

Additionally, I had the opportunity to meet with a wide variety of civic groups, community leaders, and elected officials in Victoria, Nacogdoches, and Austin to discuss the issues of immigration, health care, the judicial nominations process, ongoing hurricane relief efforts, the remarkably positive outlook for jobs and the economy, and the recent elections in Iraq. In Nacogdoches, I also participated in a roundtable with members of the agriculture community to discuss the farm bill, energy issues, immigration, and permanent repeal of the death tax.

In San Antonio, I was pleased to announce the recently awarded \$958,453 Healthy Communities Access Program grant to Access to Care for the Uninsured, which will allow this group to develop a shared patient data base to integrate and coordinate health care for patients that will allow health care providers to more effectively exchange information and therefore improve the overall level of care for the uninsured.

For More Information:

<http://www.cornyn.senate.gov/contact/index.html>

### **Border Security and Travel**

This month in Laredo, Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff announced the creation of **new Border Enforcement and Security Task Forces**, as part of the Department's Secure Border Initiative aimed at increasing control over our borders. These task forces will be nationally-integrated teams with federal, state, and local representation specifically directed at cross-border criminal activity a new border task force.

The Border Enforcement and Security Task Forces build on the Department's experiences fighting violent cross-border crime in Laredo during Operation Black Jack. Operation Black Jack has been a focused effort operated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement to coordinate Customs and Border Protection, Drug Enforcement Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigations, Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, U.S. Marshals Service, and other state and local law enforcement agencies, with significant support from the United States Attorney's Office and the District Attorney's Office.

**Improving security along our borders** is one of the top priorities facing our nation today, so this latest move by DHS is encouraging. As chairman of the Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Citizenship, I will continue working with Secretary Chertoff and other federal officials to ensure that balance is maintained between increasing security and promoting legal commerce, trade and tourism. It's critical that our Texas communities along the border aren't negatively impacted by these new measures and I'll work to make sure that doesn't happen.

For More Information:

<http://cornyn.senate.gov/record.cfm?id=250700>  
[href="http://www.cornyn.senate.gov/immigration](http://www.cornyn.senate.gov/immigration)

**Texas Takes NCAA Football Championship: Hook 'em Horns!**

Congratulations are due this month to Coach Mack Brown and the new National Championship Texas Longhorns. The Longhorns have battled some of the nation's most impressive athletic talent over the years, and it feels great to have this well-deserved title in Austin. Their victory is just one more accomplishment of which every Texan can be proud.

For More Information:

<http://cornyn.senate.gov/record.cfm?id=250697>

**Come By and Say Hello**

If you're traveling to Washington for business or pleasure, I would appreciate the chance to say hello while you're here. Every Tuesday that the Senate is in session, I host an open house in my office – Room 625 in the Hart Senate Office Building, from 9:00 to 9:30 a.m., so I can visit with my fellow Texans. Please call Alisa Merritt at (202) 224-2934 to let me know you'll be coming.

Best regards,

Senator John Cornyn

P.S.: As a special supplement to this month's newsletter, I am providing a [link](#) to a summary of a number of the **major accomplishments** of the Republican-led Senate during 2005, the first session of the 109th Congress. I hope you will find this information useful.

For More Information:

[http://www.cornyn.senate.gov/leftmenu\\_1/accomplishments.cfm](http://www.cornyn.senate.gov/leftmenu_1/accomplishments.cfm)